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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage August 29-31 on the visit of the Dalai Lama to Taiwan to offer blessings for the victims of Typhoon Morakot in southern Taiwan; and on the landslide victory of Japan's opposition Democratic Party of Japan in nationwide elections Sunday. All major Chinese-language and English-language dailies also reported on the arrival of new AIT Taipei Director William Stanton Friday and his remarks made at the Taoyuan International Airport.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an op-ed in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" discussed the Dalai Lama's visit to Taiwan and said it should become a win-win situation for all sides. An op-ed in the KMT-leaning "China Times," however, said President Ma Ying-jeou's unpredictable and inconsistent leadership style, as shown in his handling of the U.S. military aircraft coming to Taiwan in the wake of Typhoon Morakot and allowing the Dalai Lama to visit Taiwan, will be a problem that Beijing will want to resolve in the future. An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" discussed the recent developments in Washington-Beijing-Taipei ties and concluded that "Beijing will want to ensure that it is the sole regional power upon which smaller players can rely," and naturally, it will "pressure the US to leave." End summary.

### ¶3. U.S.-China-Taiwan Relations

A) "Dalai Lama's Visit to Taiwan Can Become a Win-Win Situation for All Sides"

Professor Lin Chong-pin from Tamkang University's Graduate Institute of International Affairs and Strategic Studies opined in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 520,000] (8/31):

"... Beijing's current policy toward Taiwan: soft [power] will prevail over hard [power]; will proactively strive to win popular support [of the Taiwan people]; will insist on [preserving] face while being flexible in dealing with its substantive interests. Will Beijing continue [sticking to] such a line? It depends on three factors: First, whether [the situation] inside mainland China will remain more or less stable. Namely, will the competition among the [Chinese] government leaders [come out into the open]? Will [China's] economy be out of control? Will the disturbances in every walk of life [in China] be linked together to form any [uninformed] actions? Second, will the official exchanges between China and the United States remain stable? Third, will the Taiwan government show its 'friendly gesture' both in its words and deeds?

"If the answers to the questions above are yes, then Beijing's soft policy toward Taiwan will remain the same, even though the 'honey moon' period between Hu Jintao and Ma Ying-jeou is already over. This is because mainland China's economy has already showed signs of improvement; Chinese and U.S. officials are having close contacts; the Ma administration has already quickly sent personnel to Beijing to explain the decision-making [process] behind the Dalai Lama's visit to Taiwan and the [Taiwan] authorities have exercised restraint by not meeting with the Dalai Lama. The entire evaluation

should be more positive than negative. Judging from the current situation, the Dalai Lama's visit to Taiwan could result in a win-win situation for all sides. President Ma has demonstrated his leadership by consulting with many people and then making a prompt decision -- a quite refreshing look [for Ma's leadership]. The DPP, on the other hand, revealed its capability to [launch] surprise attacks without A-bian [former President Chen Shui-bian]; the Dalai Lama has won more respect [from the Taiwan people] by cancelling his international [press] conference; and the Taiwan people suffering various disasters will be able to get blessings from the Dalai Lama, who manages to rise above religious bias and always maintains friendly relationships with all sides."

#### B) "Cross-Strait Politics Returns to Fundamentals"

Former DPP Legislator Julian Chu opined in the KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 120,000] (8/31):

"... Similar to the U.S. helicopters coming to [provide] rescue assistance in Taiwan, the Dalai Lama's visit to Taiwan to offer blessings [to the Taiwan people] may not necessarily have any political implications. But for Beijing, the former case involved the wrestling [of power] between China and the United States, while the latter was related to the conflicts concerning [cross-Strait] unification and [Taiwan] independence, so naturally [the Dalai Lama's visit] will keep Beijing on its toes. Comparatively speaking, the Dalai Lama's visit to Taiwan should be classified as one of the 'three untouchables' (i.e. Tibetan and Xinjiang independence, Taiwan independence, and the June 4th [Tiananmen Square Incident]) in terms of Beijing's foreign relations, and its political sensitivity ranks much higher than the U.S. military aircraft coming to Taiwan. But Ma chose to act in an opposite way: he merely informed Beijing in advance about the U.S. military coming to Taiwan.

"It is expected that Ma will try the best he can to mend the [broken] relations [with Beijing] by using all-out efforts to reduce the political implications of the Dalai Lama's visit to Taiwan. But even so, Ma's unpredictable and inconsistent decision-making style in terms of [Taiwan's] cross-Strait policy will inevitably become a problem that Beijing wants to resolve. ..."

#### C) "Not a Good Month for Beijing"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (8/30):

"It must have been a bad past few weeks for Beijing officials to basically tell the US to get the hell out of the region -- but that's exactly what it did last week during two days of negotiations on maritime safety between Chinese and US officials, when it requested that the US phase out and eventually end maritime surveillance in the region. The meeting, called in response to a series of near-accidents off the Chinese coast earlier this year, came at a time when China was least expected to be flexing its muscles before Washington. After all, with US President Barack Obama still new in office and his China policy just shaping up, Beijing has everything to gain from treading carefully, especially when Washington is courting its help in resolving the global financial crisis.

"Some could argue that this is an indication of Beijing's growing self-assurance, or simply the result of rising Chinese nationalism under President Hu Jintao. This is unlikely, however, because China isn't sure-footed enough yet to order the US around, and many are still undecided as to whether the US and China are strategic partners or strategic competitors. It is surprising that Beijing officials would risk undermining the budding relationship with a US administration that is widely seen as more amenable to China's objectives than its predecessor. Beijing's hardening stance is the result of something else altogether: its sense of weakness on a core issue -- Taiwan. ...

"What derailed this carefully tuned minuet wasn't careless policy or growing friction; rather, it was the immediate environment -- over which China has no control -- that changed and is now forcing a policy realignment. First came Typhoon Morakot, which devastated

southern Taiwan earlier this month. Soon afterwards, US military aircraft, helicopters and officers were for the first time in many years officially setting foot on Taiwanese soil, which had an important symbolic impact on Beijing's perceptions. To add insult to injury, the Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, has been invited to visit Taiwan, something that would have been inconceivable prior to Morakot. ...

"That Morakot and conflict in Myanmar, in addition to unrest in Xinjiang, would occur almost simultaneously has made Beijing less confident of its ability to determine the future course of the region. It has also made it more aware that despite its well-crafted -- and so far successful -- policy of ensuring stability along its border and in the region, some variables remain out of its control. As all these developments have invited -- or risk inviting -- intervention by outside forces, Beijing will want to ensure that it is the sole regional power upon which smaller players can rely. One way to achieve this, of course, will be to pressure the US to leave."

STANTON